

ARMY REGULATIONS

No. 633-15

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\*AR 633-15  
HEADQUARTERS,  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C., 7 April 1959  
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## PROCEDURE FOR MILITARY EXECUTIONS

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\* These regulations supersede DA Pam 27-4, 9 Dec 1947, including C1, 24 June 1953.

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SECTION I  
GENERAL

**1. Definitions.** For the purpose of these regulations only the following definitions apply:

*a. Confirming authority.* The competent authority of the agency through which military jurisdiction is exercised ordering the execution of a sentence of death.

*b. Officer designated to execute the approved sentence.* The officer designated by the confirming authority (*a* above) to execute the approved sentence of death.

*c. Officer charged with carrying out the execution.* The subordinate officer duly and officially named by an order of the officer designated to execute the sentence (*b* above) and directed therein to carry out the execution.

**2. Manner of execution.** Military executions will be in the manner designated by the confirming authority or by shooting, hanging, or electrocution.

**3. Witnesses.** The officer designated by the confirming authority to execute the approved sentence will prescribe whether the execution will be public or private, rules of secrecy as to time, place, and the presence of witnesses, military or civilian, including members of the press if the presence of the latter is deemed proper. In the case of the execution of a foreign national, the officer designated to execute the sentence will prescribe whether persons of the same nationality as the condemned may be present. Neither photographs nor motion pictures of the actual execution will be permitted except for official purposes. The environs of the place of execution will be closely and securely guarded to prevent the intrusion of unauthorized persons. All persons in attendance will be cautioned that no demonstrations or unseemly conduct will be tolerated.

**4. Multiple executions.** In multiple executions by electrocution in the continental United States the prisoners will be executed in succession and the same electric chair will be used for each execution. In multiple executions by musketry or hanging, the prisoners may be executed either simultaneously or in succession. Where two or more prisoners are to be executed in succession by musketry or hanging, the same execution party or gallows may be used for each execution. Where two or more prisoners are to be executed simultaneously by musketry, a separate execution party will be provided for each of the prisoners. The latter will be placed in line at an interval of ten paces. Where two or more prisoners are to be executed simultaneously by hanging, the officer designated to execute

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the sentence will prescribe the number of gallows to be erected, and the prisoners will be hanged from the gallows simultaneously or by groups.

**5. Escort.** The escort for execution by musketry or hanging may be dismounted or motorized, but upon arrival at the scene of execution, motorized escorts will form in the manner prescribed for dismounted escorts. The minimum escort will consist of components as prescribed in paragraphs 11a and 15a. Where the prisoner is to be executed by electrocution, the strength, formation, and duties of the guard escort will be as prescribed by the officer charged with carrying out the execution.

**6. Chaplain.** In all executions, a chaplain of the prisoner's choice will be provided if practicable. If no chaplain of the prisoner's choice or of his particular faith and/or race is available, the officer charged with the execution of the sentence will take all reasonable measures to provide a civilian clergyman of that faith and/or race. The chaplain should be available at all times after the prisoner is notified of the time of execution.

**7. Medical officer.** A medical officer will be officially designated to be in attendance upon the execution. It will be his duty to determine the extinction of life in the prisoner and to make pronouncement thereof. He will furnish a death certificate to accompany the report of execution.

**8. Interpreter.** In the event the prisoner does not speak English, an interpreter will be officially designated to be in attendance at the notification of the prisoner (par. 9a) and the execution. It is his duty to interpret the charge, finding, sentence orders, and any last statement made by the prisoner. Before entering upon his duties, the interpreter will take the oath or affirmation required of an interpreter for a court-martial.

**9. Miscellaneous.** a. The prisoner will be notified of the time of execution no less than 24 hours prior thereto if practicable, at which time the charge, finding, sentence, and order directing the execution will be read to him by the officer charged with carrying out the execution. The chaplain should be present.

b. Unless the exigencies of the situation preclude such action, due notice of the time and place of execution will be given to the next of kin of the prisoner and an opportunity provided for the claiming of the body following the execution.

c. Items of clothing and alterations thereto to be worn by a prisoner to be executed by hanging or electrocution will be as prescribed by the officer charged with carrying out the execution, in

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accordance with the technical instructions of the executioner. A prisoner in the Armed Forces of the United States will be dressed in regulation uniform from which all decorations, insignia, or other evidence of membership therein have been removed. Likewise, no such evidences will appear on any clothing used in burial. Similar procedures may be dispensed with, at the discretion of the officer charged with carrying out the execution (or higher authority) in the case of a prisoner in the armed forces of another nation. A prisoner not within the foregoing categories may be dressed in any clothing available.

*d.* After the prisoner is notified of the time of execution (*a* above), the commanding officer of the place of confinement will, where practicable, approve any reasonable special request of the prisoner, including special request for food, and permission to have in his possession a Bible, Rosary, or similar religious articles during the execution. Sufficient writing paper and envelopes should be furnished and no limit placed on the number of letters which may be written. All letters are subject to censorship and may or may not be forwarded.

## SECTION II

### EXECUTION BY MUSKETRY

**10. Officer charged with carrying out execution.** The officer charged with carrying out the execution will command the escort and make the necessary arrangements for the conduct of the execution. He will—

*a.* Instruct and rehearse the escort and the execution party in their duties, insuring that all members of the execution party are qualified in the weapon to be used.

*b.* Arrange for the receipt of the prisoner by the prisoner guard.

*c.* Arrange for an execution party of eight men and one sergeant.

*d.* Arrange for a chaplain to accompany the prisoner.

*e.* Arrange for the presence of a medical officer at the scene of the execution.

*f.* Cause a post with proper rings placed therein for securing the prisoner in an upright position to be erected at the place of execution.

*g.* Cause eight rifles to be loaded in his presence. At least one but no more than three will be loaded with blank ammunition. He will place the rifles at random in the rack provided for that purpose.

*h.* Provide a black hood to cover the head of the prisoner.

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*i.* Provide a 4-inch round target, white or black as appropriate; a black target will be used when light colored clothing is worn.

*j.* Cause the prisoner's wrists to be secured either behind his back or in front at the waist (fig. 1), before or immediately after his receipt by the prisoner guard.

*k.* Provide straps to secure the prisoner to the post at waist and ankles.

**11. Assembly of escort.** *a.* The prisoner guard will consist of four men armed with rifles, under the command of a sergeant (armed with a pistol. At the proper time, the prisoner guard will proceed to the place of confinement to receive the prisoner.

*b.* The execution party will be formed unarmed and proceed to a previously prepared rack of rifles, secure arms, and move to the scene of the execution, halting 15 paces from and facing the position to be taken by the prisoner. The sergeant of the execution party will be armed with a pistol. At close interval, at order arms, and at parade rest the execution party will await the arrival of the prisoner and escort.

*c.* Witnesses, if any, will take position facing the scene of the execution, 15 paces to the right and 5 paces to the front of the execution party.

*d.* At the designated time, the prisoner, with his wrists bound securely behind his back or in front at the waist (fig. 1), accompanied by the chaplain, will be received by the prisoner guard. The escort will then proceed to the scene of the execution.

*e.* The prisoner guard, prisoner, and chaplain will proceed directly to the prisoner's post, halt, and face the execution party.

**12. Execution.** *a.* The officer charged with carrying out the execution will take position in front of the execution party and face the prisoner. He will notify the prisoner and the chaplain that a brief time will be allowed the prisoner for any last statement. After a reasonable time, he will order the sergeant of the execution party and the sergeant of the prisoner guard to secure the prisoner to the post and to place the hood over his head. The medical officer then will place the target over the prisoner's heart. The prisoner prepared, the officer charged with carrying out the execution will order the prisoner guard to move to a position five paces behind the execution party. The chaplain and medical officer will take positions five paces to the left of and five paces to the front of the execution party. The officer charged with carrying out the execution will take position five paces to the right of and five paces to the front of the execution party.

b. Commands for the execution will be given orally as prescribed below:

- (1) At the command READY, the execution party will take that position and unlock rifles.
- (2) At the command AIM, the execution party will take that position with rifles aimed at target on the prisoner's body.
- (3) At the command FIRE, the execution party will fire simultaneously.
- (4) The officer charged with carrying out the execution will then bring the execution party to "Order Arms."

c. The officer charged with carrying out the execution will join the medical officer who will examine the prisoner and, if necessary, direct that the "coup de grace" be administered. Should the medical officer so decide, the sergeant of the execution party will administer the "coup de grace," with a hand weapon, holding the muzzle just above the ear and one foot from the head.

d. Upon pronouncement of the death of the prisoner by the medical officer, the execution party will proceed to the rack from which the rifles were originally obtained, and replace the rifles in the rack at random. The execution party will then be dismissed.

e. The prisoner guard will return to the area of their quarters and be dismissed.

### SECTION III

#### EXECUTION BY HANGING

**13. Officer charged with carrying out execution.** The officer charged with carrying out the execution will command the escort and make the necessary arrangements for the conduct of the execution. He will—

- a. Instruct components of the escort in their duties.
- b. Arrange for the receipt of the prisoner by the prisoner guard.
- c. Arrange for a chaplain to accompany the prisoner.
- d. Arrange for the presence of a medical officer at the scene of the execution.
- e. Provide a proper gallows.
- f. Provide a black hood to cover the head of the prisoner.
- g. Provide a collapse board for use if necessary.
- h. Cause the prisoner's wrists to be secured before or immediately upon his receipt by the prisoner guard. The wrists may be secured either behind the back or in front, fastened to the belt (fig. 1).

i. Determine the proper amount of drop of the prisoner through the trapdoor. A standard drop chart for normal men of given weights is given below. Variation of the drop because of physical condition may be necessary. A medical officer will be consulted to determine whether any factors, such as age, health, or muscular condition will affect the amount of drop necessary for a proper execution.

120 lbs or less	8' 1"	170 lbs	6' 0"
125 lbs	7' 10"	175 lbs	5' 11"
130 lbs	7' 7"	180 lbs	5' 9"
135 lbs	7' 4"	185 lbs	5' 7"
140 lbs	7' 1"	190 lbs	5' 6"
145 lbs	6' 9"	195 lbs	5' 5"
150 lbs	6' 7"	200 lbs	5' 4"
155 lbs	6' 6"	205 lbs	5' 2"
160 lbs	6' 4"	210 lbs	5' 1"
165 lbs	6' 2"	220 lbs and over	5' 0"

j. Rehearse the execution within 24 hours prior to the scheduled time for the execution. A sandbag or similar object approximating the prisoner's weight may be used to insure proper functioning of the gallows, trapdoor, and hangman's noose.

**14. Executioner.** An official experienced executioner will be appointed by the officer charged with carrying out the execution. If one is not available to the command, a professional civilian executioner may be obtained and appointed. In the event a professional executioner is not available, a suitable emotionally stable member of the command will be selected and appointed executioner.

**15. Assembly.** a. The prisoner guard will consist of 10 men armed with rifles, two corporals armed with pistols, under the command of a sergeant armed with a pistol. The prisoner guard will form in double ranks and at the proper time will proceed to the door of the place of confinement to receive the prisoner.

b. Witnesses, if any, will assemble at the scene of the execution in positions designated by the officer charged with carrying out the execution.

c. At the designated time the prisoner, with his wrists bound securely, accompanied by the chaplain, will be received by the prisoner guard and placed between the ranks. The escort will then proceed to the scene of the execution.

d. Upon the arrival of the escort at the scene of the execution, the corporals and the sergeant of the prisoner guard will conduct the prisoner to the platform of the gallows, the officer charged with carrying out the execution and the chaplain preceding the prisoner.



**16. Execution.** *a.* The officer charged with carrying out the execution will notify the chaplain and the prisoner that a brief time will be allowed the prisoner for any last statement. After a reasonable time, he will have the executioner place the hood over the prisoner's head, bind the prisoner's ankles, adjust the noose around the prisoner's neck, and then take position at the trigger. Upon signal from the officer charged with carrying out the execution, the executioner will spring the trap. The medical officer will then examine the body for time of death and report to the officer charged with carrying out the execution.

*b.* Upon the pronouncement of the death of the prisoner, the escort will return to the area of their quarters and be dismissed.

#### SECTION IV

#### EXECUTION BY ELECTROCUTION

**17. General.** Execution by electrocution may be effected only at the confinement facility designated by Headquarters, Department of the Army. Procedures for execution by electrocution will necessarily vary from those prescribed for execution by musketry or hanging.

**18. Officer charged with carrying out execution.** The officer charged with carrying out the execution will make the necessary arrangements for the conduct of the execution. He will—

*a.* Select and appoint such personnel, including guards, as may be required to carry out the execution.

*b.* Instruct all components of the execution party in their duties.

*c.* Arrange for a chaplain to accompany the prisoner.

*d.* Arrange for the presence of a medical officer at the scene of the execution.

*e.* Provide the mechanical facilities and items of equipment and clothing required to carry out the execution.

**19. Executioner.** The officer charged with carrying out the execution will obtain and appoint a professional civilian executioner to perform the execution. Execution by electrocution may not be performed by other than a professional civilian executioner.

**20. Execution.** *a.* On the day of execution, the prisoner will be clothed and otherwise prepared in accordance with instructions of the executioner.

*b.* At the designated time, the prisoner, accompanied by the chaplain, will proceed under guard from the prisoner's cell into the execution chamber. The officer charged with carrying out the exe-



cution will notify the chaplain and the prisoner that a brief time will be allowed the prisoner for any last statement. After a reasonable time, he will order the guards to place the prisoner in the electric chair according to the instructions of the executioner. Following the placing of the prisoner in the electric chair, the officer charged with carrying out the execution, the guards, the chaplain, and the medical officer will move to designated positions in the execution chamber. The executioner will then perform final preparations. Upon signal from the executioner that all final preparations have been completed and he is ready to proceed, the officer charged with carrying out the execution will signal the executioner to perform the execution.

c. Upon notification from the executioner that he may proceed, the medical officer will then examine the body, note the time of death, and report to the officer charged with carrying out the execution.

d. Upon pronouncement of the death of the prisoner, the officer charged with carrying out the execution will dismiss the execution party.

## SECTION V

### PROCEEDINGS AFTER EXECUTION

**21. Disposition of remains.** The officer charged with carrying out the execution will arrange in advance for an ambulance or other conveyance with sufficient personnel to be in attendance upon the execution to receive and care for the body. If the next of kin or other relatives of the deceased desire the body, the officer charged with carrying out the execution will, if practicable, permit its delivery to them for burial. If no such claim is made, he will cause it to be buried in a post or civilian cemetery or at the place of death, whichever may be deemed proper and is authorized by pertinent regulations. Disposition of remains of such personnel of the Armed Forces of the United States is governed by Army Regulations of the 638-series or comparable regulations of the United States Navy or United States Air Force as appropriate. All burials in post cemeteries are governed by AR 210-190.

**22. Disposition of effects.** See 10 USC 4712 et seq. and AR 643-50 or AR 643-55 as applicable. War criminals and civilian resident criminals convicted by a Military Tribunal and executed by military authorities are considered as subject to military law for the purpose of disposition of effects.

**23. Notification and reports.** The officer designated to execute the approved sentence will notify The Adjutant General immedi-

ately following the execution, by fastest available method of communication, of the carrying out of the sentence of death, the time, place and any unusual circumstances attendant thereon. He will likewise, in addition, furnish other notifications as may be required by AR 600-65 and AR 600-66 or AR 600-67. The quartermaster or other officer in charge of burial will furnish the report of burial as required in the regulations cited in paragraph 21.

## SECTION VI

### MODIFICATION OF PROCEDURES

**24. Limited facilities.** If the facilities are not available for the carrying out of each of the provisions of this regulation or if the exigencies of the situation require it, the officer designated to execute the approved sentence may make the necessary modification of the provisions herein contained, except that he may not change the mode of execution. Any modification will be reported in writing to the confirming authority.

**25. In time of war.** In time of war, only the minimum number of troops necessary to accomplish the execution need be employed.

## SECTION VII

### STRUCTURES

**26. Permanent scaffold.** A permanent type, demountable scaffold, with a metal trigger mechanism, will be erected when the need for such a structure is determined by the commanding officer (fig. 2). Where available, troops belonging to the Corps of Engineers will be employed in the constructing of the scaffold, but where not available, or where it is more practicable, other troops or civilians may be employed. Preliminary tests will be made to insure the strength of the rope and the stability of the scaffold's construction. If facilities are limited, a trapdoor on the second floor of the building may be constructed to effect the execution, or a similar improvisation employed.

**27. Semipermanent scaffold.** A semipermanent scaffold which requires no special metal fittings may be used in executions by hanging when deemed expedient by the officer charged with carrying out the execution (fig. 3).

**28. Emergency structures.** When the exigencies of the field so dictate, emergency type gallows may be used (fig. 4).

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SECTION VIII  
EQUIPMENT

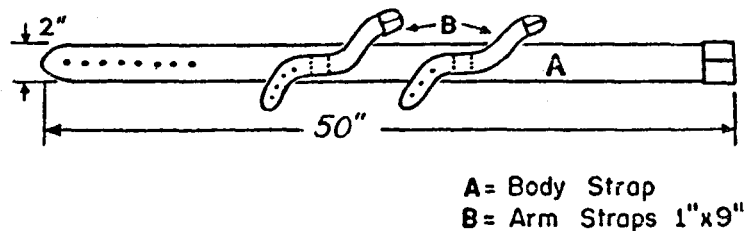
**29. Hood.** The hood will be black, the outer surface of rough materials, split at the open end so that it will come well down on the prisoner's chest and back.

**30. Collapse board and binding strap.** A collapse board will be provided for use in case of the collapse of the prisoner (fig. 5).

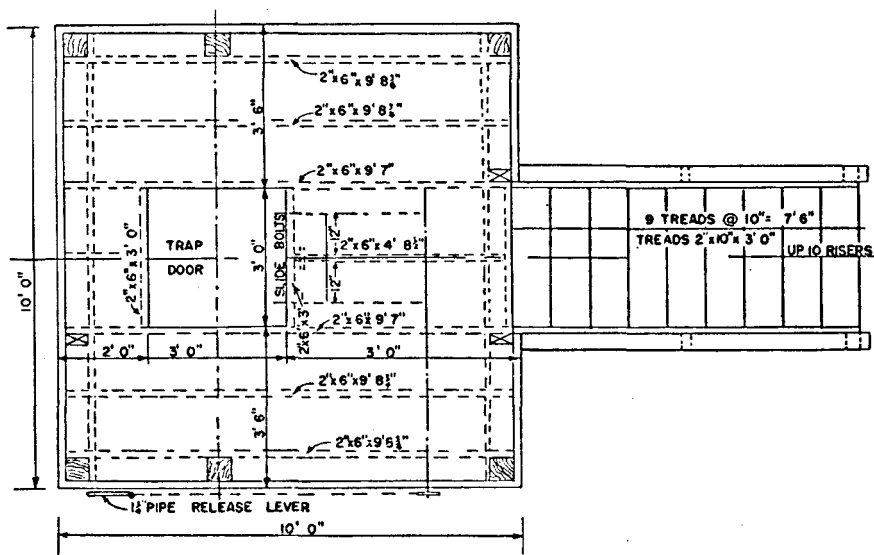
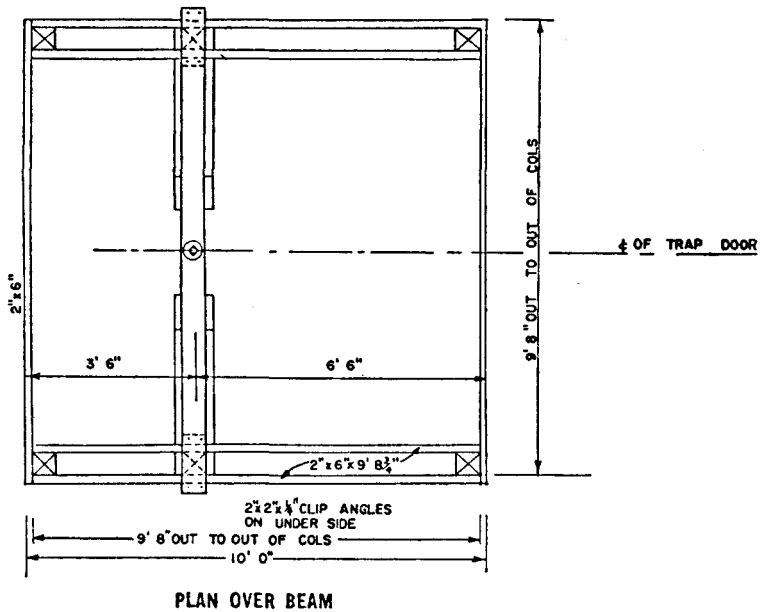
**31. Rope.** The rope will be of manila hemp, at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch and not more than  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter and approximately 30 feet in length. The rope will be boiled and then stretched while drying to eliminate any spring, stiffness, or tendency to coil. The hangman's knot (fig. 7) will be used in the preparation of the noose. That portion of the noose which slides through the knot will be treated with wax, soap, or grease to insure a smooth sliding action through the knot. The noose will be placed snugly around the prisoner's neck in such a manner that the hangman's knot is directly behind his left ear.

**32. Post.** Design for post used in execution by musketry as mentioned in paragraph 12a, is shown in figure 6.

**33. Electrocution.** Facilities and equipment for effecting execution by means of electrocution will be in accordance with Headquarters, Department of the Army instructions.



*Figure 1. Binding strap.*



PLATFORM AND STAIR PLAN AT SECTION A-A SCALE 1/2" = 1'

Figure 2 ①. Permanent scaffold.

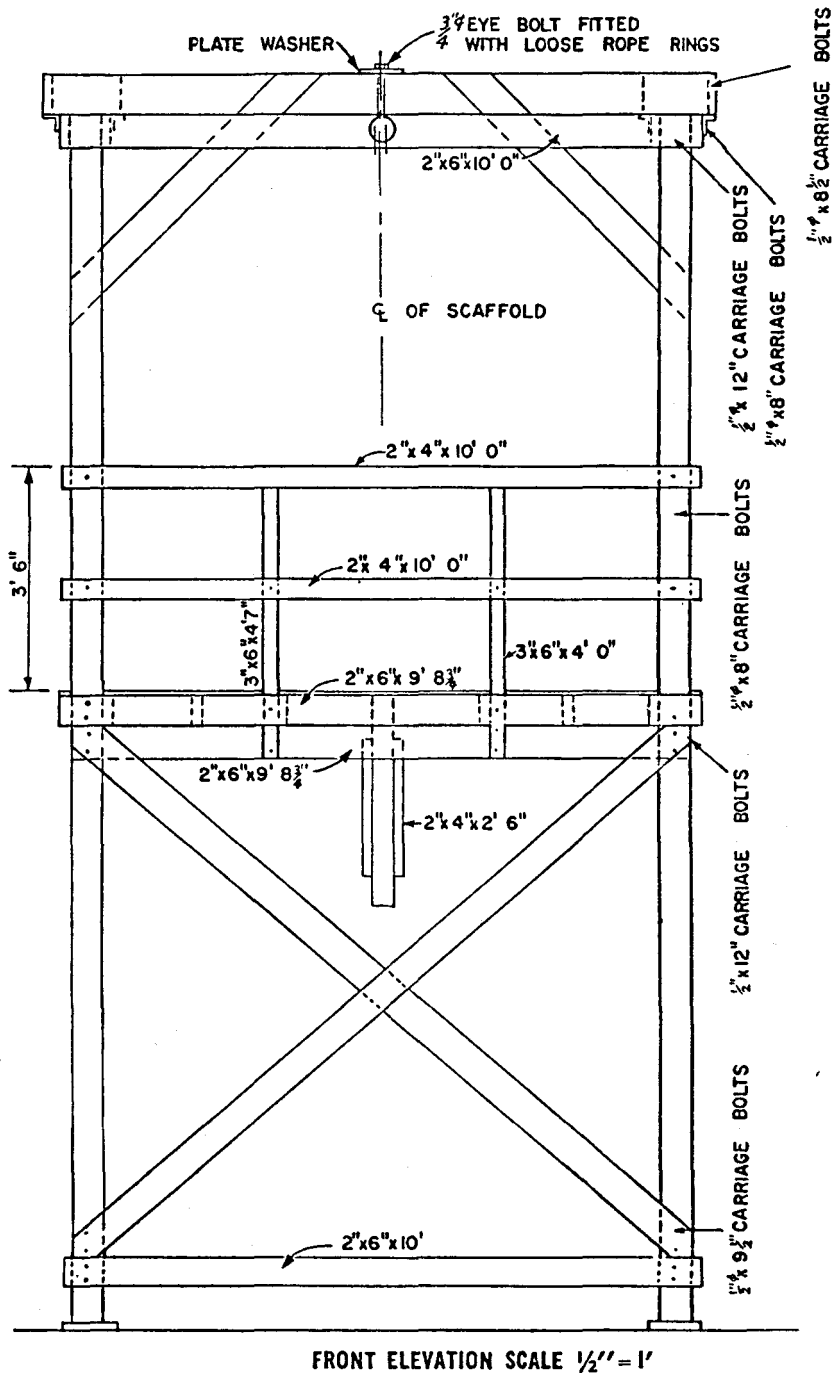
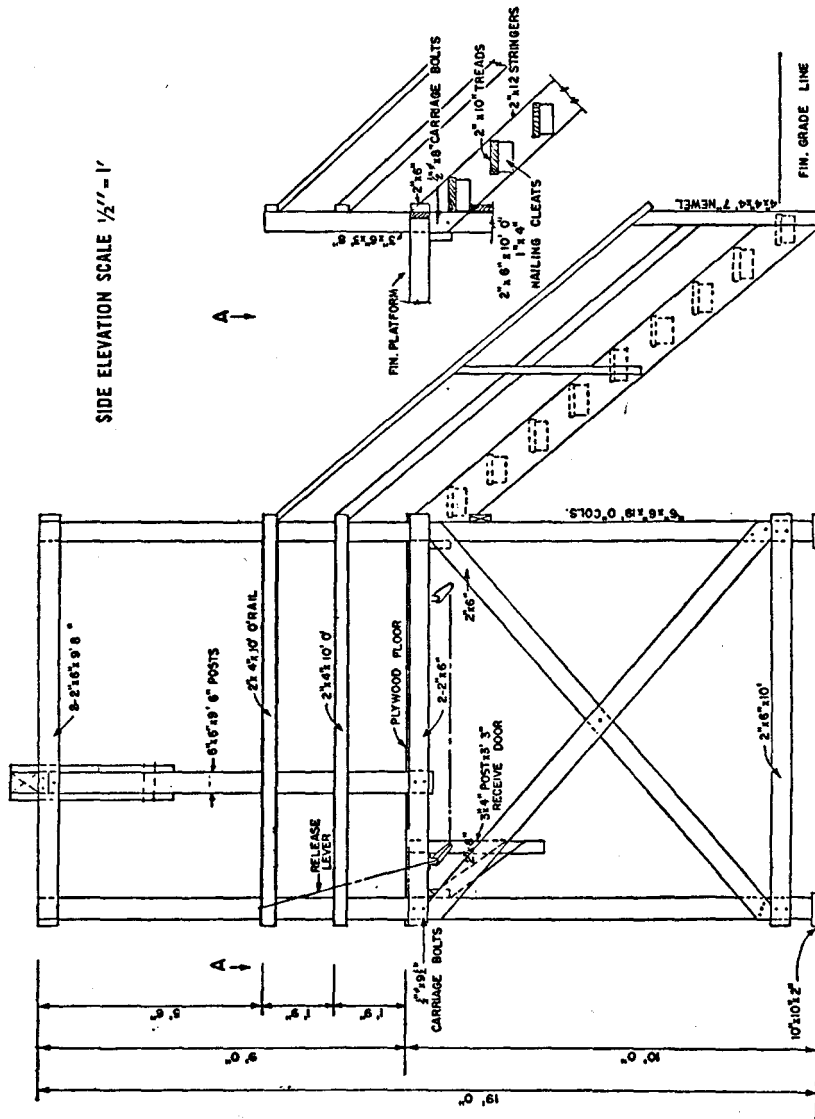


Figure 2 ②. Permanent scaffold, front elevation.

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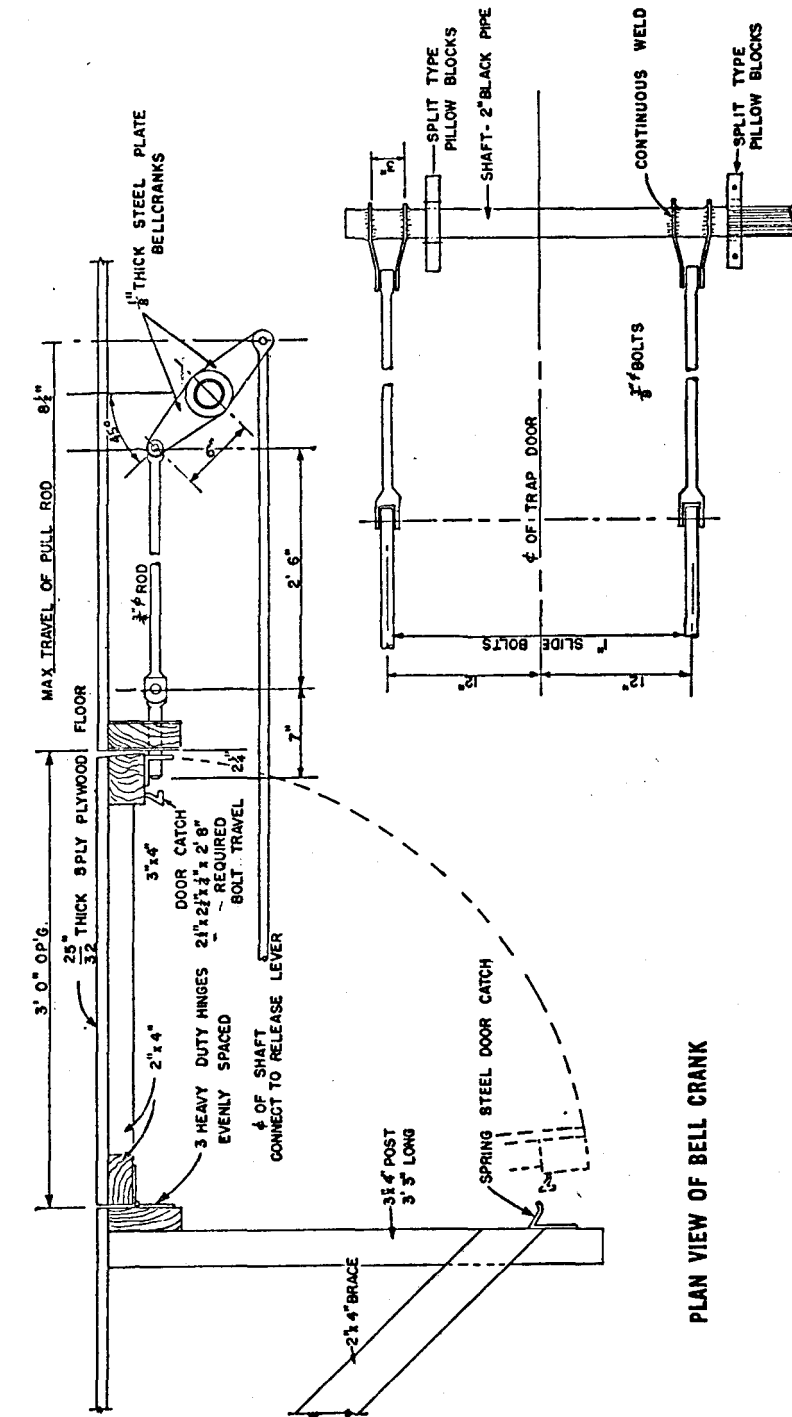


Figure 2 ④. Permanent scaffold, bell crank.



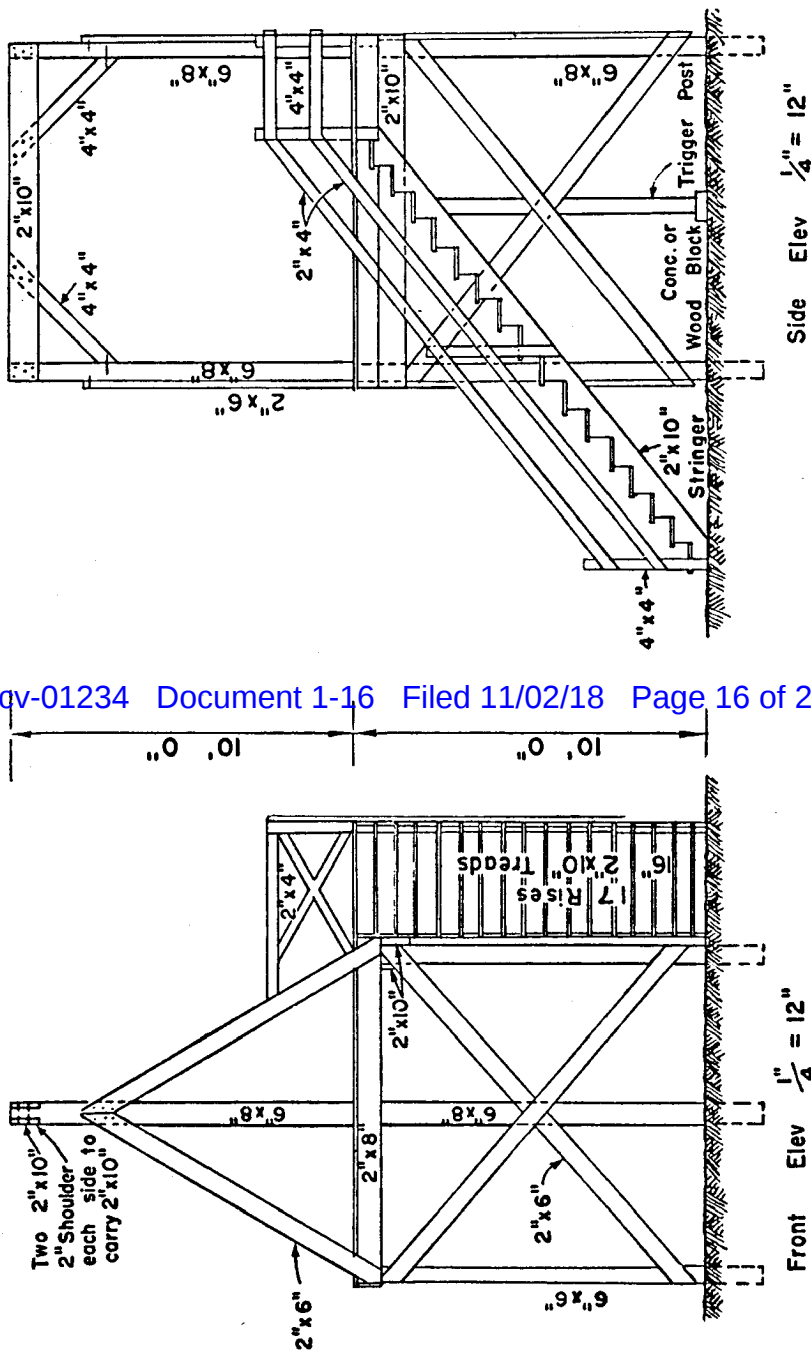
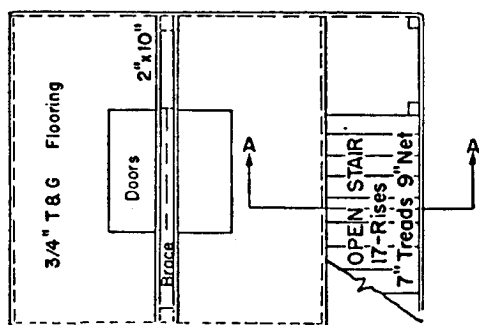
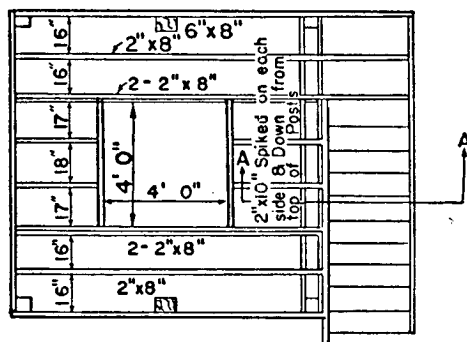


Figure 8 ①. Semipermanent scaffold.

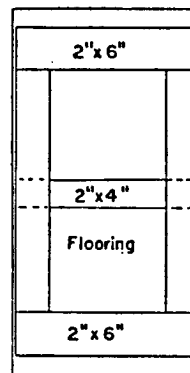
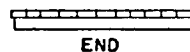


Plan of Platform  $\frac{1}{4}'' = 12''$

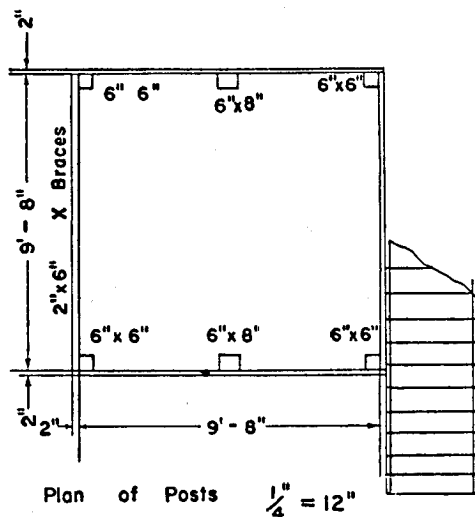
2"x8" Spiked All Around Top Of  
6"x6" To Form Plate or Ribbon



Framing For Floor  $\frac{1}{4}'' = 12''$

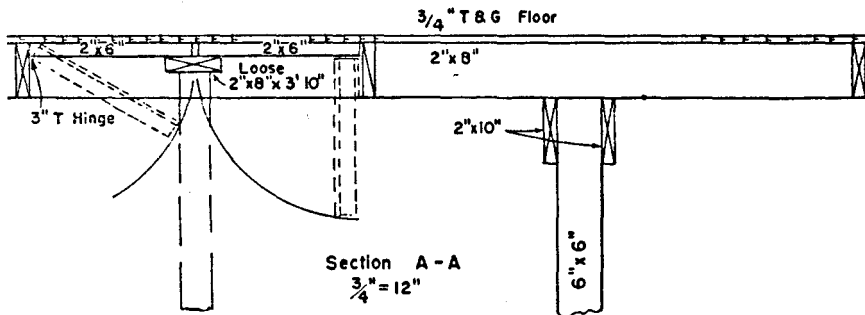


Plan of Underside  
Trap Door, One Half  
 $\frac{3}{4}'' = 12''$

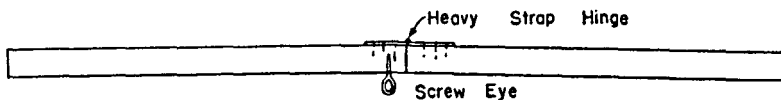


Plan of Posts  $\frac{1}{4}'' = 12''$

Figure 3 ②. Semipermanent scaffold, details.



Elevation of Trigger Post  $\frac{3}{4}'' = 12''$

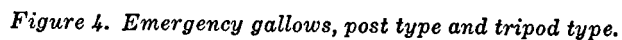


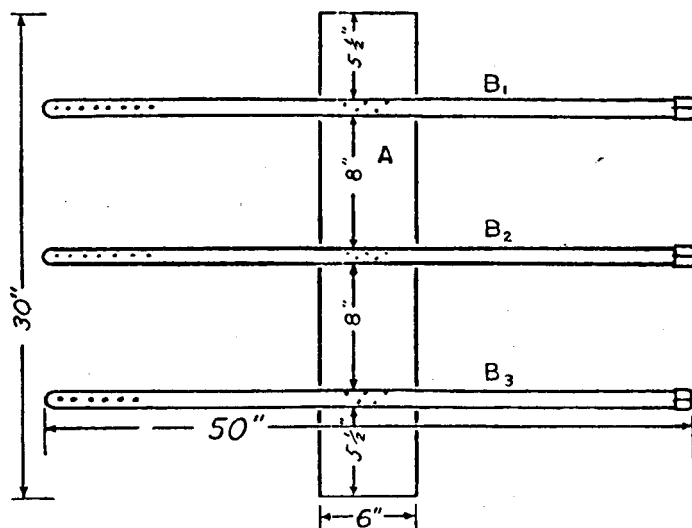
4"x4" 9' 6" Long Cut In Two Pieces At Center  
Hinged To Stand with 1-Inch Bow At Center

## MATERIALS

2	pcs	6"x8"-	22'	Long	Gallows Posts
4		6"x6"-	12'		Platform Posts
2		2"x10"-	12'		Step Stringers
4		2"x10"-	10'		Cross Bar - Beam
3		2"x8"-	14'		Joist- Ext for stair landing
1		2"x8"-	12'		Joist- Short
7		2"x8"-	10'		Joists- Regular
8		2"x6"-	14'		X Braces
4		2"x6"-	10'		Gallows Braces
1		4"x4"-	10'		Knee Braces (cut to 5' 0")
4		4"x4"-	4'		Newels
2		2"x4"-	16'		Stair Rail
1		2"x4"-	14'		Stair Rail
3		2"x4"-	10'		Stair Rail & Trap Door Rail
(Flooring if 2" thlck					{ 10 pc 2"x8" 12' Long
					{ 6 2"x8" 10' Long
					{ 3 2"x8" 8' Long
1	pc	2"x6"-	8'	Long	Trap Door Rails
1		2"x6 3/4"-	8'		140 BM 3/4" T & G Pine Flooring
2		2"x10"-	10'		Cut into 3' 6" lengths Step Tread
4		4"x4"-	14'		Trigger

Figure 3 ③. Semipermanent scaffold, details—Continued.





A - Brace Board

B<sub>1</sub> B<sub>2</sub> B<sub>3</sub> = 1 Inch straps

Figure 5. Collapse board.

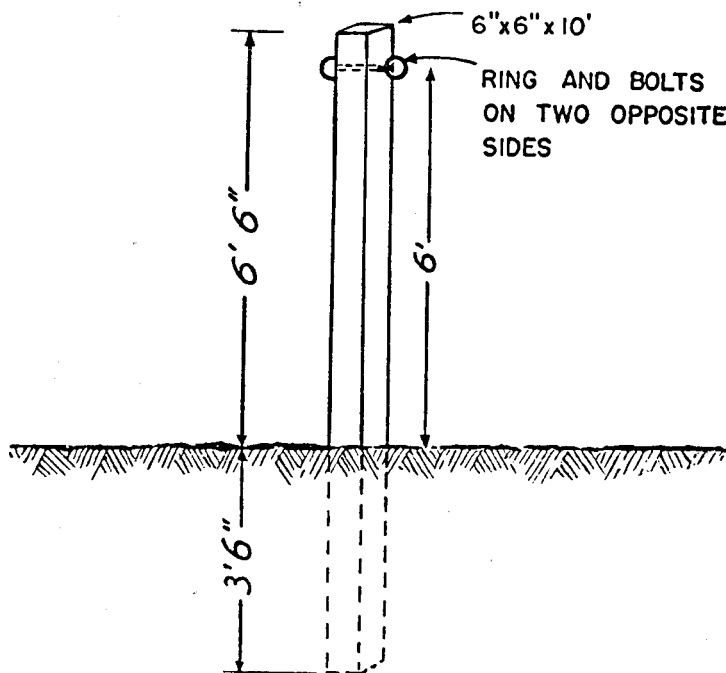
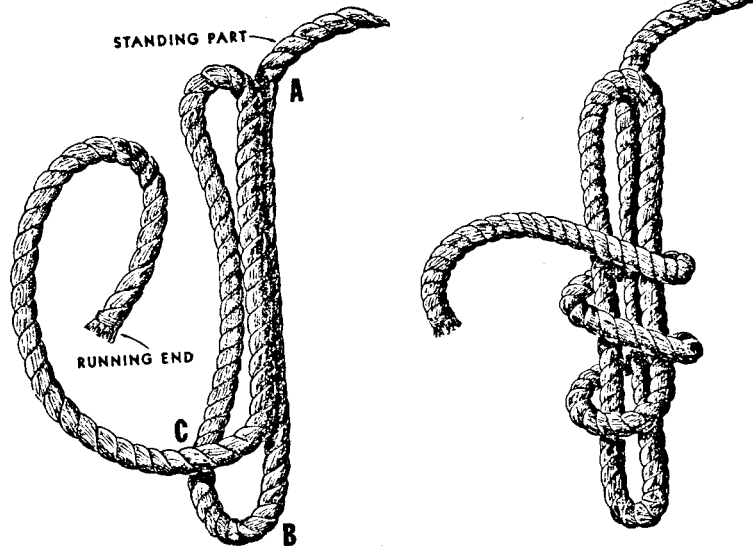
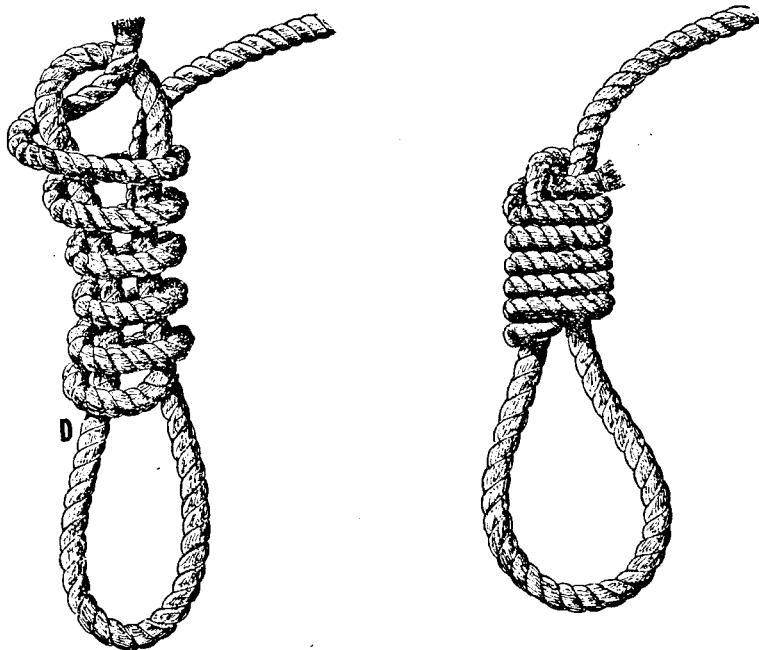


Figure 6. Post used in execution by musketry.



Length of loops: from A to B should be approximately 18 inches, and from C to Running End should be approximately 35 inches to 108 inches depending upon diameter of the rope. Wrap Running End around for six turns. No extra rope should remain.

Figure 7 ① and ②. Hangman's knot.



Tighten loops by pulling at Running End. Lock loops and form knot by pulling down at point D. Slide knot up or down on Standing Part to adjust size of loop.

Figure 7 ③ and ④.

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[AG 250 (16 Mar 59) PMGK]

By Order of *Wilber M. Brucker*, Secretary of the Army:

MAXWELL D. TAYLOR,  
*General, United States Army,*  
*Chief of Staff.*

Official:

R. V. LEE,  
*Major General, United States Army,*  
*The Adjutant General.*

Distribution:

*Active Army:* D.

To be distributed as needed to Headquarters of Department of the Army Staff Agencies, Headquarters Army Audit Agency and field offices, Headquarters of Major Commands.

*NG:* State AG (3).

*USAR:* None.